

# A Vision of the Cloister.

On the old stone bridge I loiter, where  
Cocalico's clear water  
Past the mill and 'neath the willows  
ripples o'er its pebbly bed,  
All around me birds are singing, and  
their melody is ringing  
Like a voice from bygone ages, like a  
message from the dead.

## 2.

So my wand'ring fancies guide me, little  
caring what betide me,  
Till I pause at last to rest me, all alone  
upon the stile;  
And the trees that rustled 'round me,  
and the mountain wind that found me,  
Bade me linger there, and silently I  
sat me down awhile.

## 3.

In the West the sunset golden shone in  
splendor never olden,  
Then it faded, and thro' rose and gray  
the stars came out at last;  
And above the cloister hoary a young  
moon hung in glory,  
As it shone in bygone ages—as it shone  
there in the past.

## 4.

Back my truant fancy wandered, and on  
days of old I pondered,  
Till the veil of Time was rent apart,  
and something spake to me!  
Nay, me thought, 'tis only seeming, and  
my soul is only dreaming,  
As a vision of the Cloister reveals itself  
to me.

## 5.

One by one I saw the Brothers, only  
they and none of others,  
Gather slowly and sedately in the Saal  
of praise and prayer;  
Not one word was said nor spoken, as  
in silence all unbroken  
Came they from their quiet cells, 'till  
all the Brotherhood stood there.

## 6.

One among them pale and fasting, heavy  
eyelids downward casting,  
Stood amid the white cow'd brothers  
there in sadness and in gloom,  
Till in solemn quiet moving, with mien  
stern and all reproving,  
Brother Friedsam slow stepped forward  
to pronounce a victim's doom.

## 7.

"Speak thou, ere thou goest hither; goest,  
none save thou know'st whither,  
From thy cloister-home forever at the  
earliest hour of morn!  
Speak thou once without repression, make  
thou here a full confession,  
O, thou sinful one and erring! thou  
who best had ne'er been born."

## 8.

"Brothers, ye all deem me sinning, and  
 I may not hope for winning  
 Faith or change in any judgment ye  
 may choose to pass on me!  
 Vain it were to plead contrition—useless  
 would be my petition!  
 Yet my heart is pure within me, and  
 my soul from fault is free!

## 9.

"Lo! the night on which ye sought me,  
 here my longing spirit brought me,  
 And through all the long night watches  
 knelt I here in fervent prayer.  
 For these sacred walls so holy, could they  
 speak, would tell how lowly  
 And how humbly knelt I here alone,  
 with not one thought of care.

## 10.

"Nay! the planks of this old flooring,  
 where so oft ye knelt adoring,  
 Might show you, if they only could, the  
 marks of my bare feet!  
 As I sought these holy places, but my  
 footsteps left no traces;  
 Yet, oh, brothers! bless me once more  
 ere I go, my doom to meet!"

## 11.

Down before them dropped he, kneeling;  
 hands upraised in strong appealing;  
 Eyes uplifted to the poplar beams  
 above them broadly spread—  
 Then the white-garbed crowd up-rising,  
 saw a wonder all surprising,  
 Footprints unto them appearing on that  
 ceiling overhead!

## 12.

Then a sound of sweetest singing, like  
 celestial voices ringing—  
 And a flash of light and lustre, as the  
 angels passed away!  
 But the brethren gazed in sadness at the  
 face serene in gladness,  
 Whence the spirit had departed and had  
 left them but the clay!

## 13.

Ah! such, methought, the story of the  
 Cloister gray and hoary,  
 Which the winds and waters whispered  
 as their magic o'er me fell—  
 For yon buildings sure are haunted by  
 strange memories enchanted,  
 And spirits surely linger 'round each  
 ancient wall and cell.

—Mary N. Robinson.

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